

THE CONCISE HISTORY OF INOMA (UNOMA) IN ANAMBRA WEST L.G.A ANAMBRA STATE (OLD EASTERN REGION)

Inoma is one of the communities/towns in Igala speaking communities in Anambra West L.G.A, Anambra State. The mileage kilometer from Inoma to Nzam is 6.5km, from Inoma to Aguleri junction is 27.2km, from Inoma to heart of Onitsha (Basilica of the Holy Trinity, Onitsha) is 40.4km. Inoma has boundary in the North with Iregu/Ikah through which one can connect to Abuja FCT through Idah/ Lokoja Road. Inoma has boundary in the North West with Edo State as one crosses Niger River Odekpe to Ozogono Market in Edo State. Finally, Inoma has boundary in the South with Nzam (headquarters of Anambra West L.G.A) and in the East Inoma boundary with Mmiata and in the West with Odekpe. Taking River transport from Onitsha at opposite Ose Market garage/John Holt Company and besides yam dealer's canopy, one boards boat, following the River Niger up streams, one has to come across Onono, Umuikwu Anam, Oroma Etiti Anam, Nkwoji Farm Settlement and then through tributary of the River Niger to Nzam and finally arrives at Inoma. Taking land transport from Onitsha at Ose Market Garage, one boards a bus loading to Inoma, the bus has to pass through 3-3, Nkwele Ezunaka, Nsugbe Road to Umueri junction or Aguleri junction to Otuocho Omambala bridge head to Ezi/ Ifite Anam Road through Oroma Etiti to Umuem/Nkwoji Farm Settlement to Nzam and finally to Inoma.

Inoma people are descendant of AKPALI the son of AGULU from UNANA village of Igala-Mela in Idah, Ancient Igala kingdom, Kogi State. The main Igala speaking State in Nigeria is Kogi State; North central. However in Anambra State, we have Igala speaking communities which include: Nzam, headquarter of Anambra West L.G.A and Olumbanasaa. Olumbanasaa is made up of seven major communities and their allied villages that merged together for

their common goals and interest. They include the following: Inoma Akato, Igbedor, Odekpe, Odomagwu, Ode, Igbokaenyi and Alla/Onugwa.

Note: Owelle and Ukwalla were used to be part and parcel of Inoma Akato. However, due village politics, little conflicts and most importantly, the quest for autonomous existence to maintain the names of their community's ancestors; they separated for good from Inoma and formed allied autonomous communities. Meanwhile Inoma (Unoma) people are descendant of AKPALI, the son of AGULU from UNANA village of Igala Mela in Idah; Igala Ancient kingdom who migrated down wards about seven centuries ago. Among his brothers, in the Amoma- Onuija clan/kindred of Unana village in Idah were the following: AYA, AKURO, IREGU, ITE, IYANO, UJEH, INEME, IKAKA, ISHI (all in Ibaji L.G.A, Kogi State). Others include: UNOMA, IGBEDOR, OSOMALLA AND ODEKPE. Odekpe people are divided into two; one in Anambra West L.G.A, the other in Ogbaru L.G.A (all in Anambra State) the last and not the least was EKPELI in Edo State. They were fourteen (14) brothers that descended directly from Idah.

THE COURSE OF AKPALI'S MIGRATION AND THE GENEALOGY OF UNOMA PEOPLE

In the course of his migration, AKPALI first arrived ALIGONU RIVER (a place presently located and inhabited by Iregu People) and settled with his two wives. He had three children with his two wives namely OKOLO-ODU, EKPEJA (from first wife) and AJOALE (from the second wife). AKPALI also set out with three idols namely OKILO, AKULAKWU, and OJIAGAMA. Now, OKILO is presently at Unoma while AKULAGWU has a masquerade in Unoma and Igbedor till today. But Akulakwu's shrine is located at Igbedor.

Consequently, Okolo-Odu, the first son of Akpali married two wives as well. The first wife is called Afo, who begot Uja: the father of Unoma.

THE REASON FOR THE NAME UNOMA (INOMA)

Now, Uja, the son of Akolo-Odu and the grand son of Akpali married his first wife and was childless for donkey years. However, as he and wife were migrating with his brothers (half brothers: uncles and cousins), they found a more fertile arable lands and vegetations suitable for farming and hunting at a place called ODO-MOMA. They lived and settle there for some years. It was there that God blessed Uja with a baby boy through his first wife that had been barren for years. Meanwhile, yearly over flowing of River Niger and other rivers and streams around; that is flooding, indicated that most land areas of ODO-MOMA were always flooded whereas across the River Niger seemed more to be upland. Therefore, after some few years, the brothers of Uja decided they all should cross the Niger River to the hill land across but Uja refused vehemently saying that since the God of heaven and the gods of ODO-MOMA blessed him with a baby boy there in ODO-MOMA, that he and his first wife should remain there to nurse their baby child. Now, in Igala language “to nurse” is “Une” and child is “Oma”. If you join these two Igala words together it is “Uneoma/Unoma” meaning: “Nursing a child”.

However, when the brothers of Uja realized that Uja was strongly determined to remain and “to nurse his child” at ODO-MOMA, they packed all their property and crossed the Niger and settled at uplands there near Illah. They first lived and settled at a place called EZI currently in Delta State. As brothers of Uja were living in Ezi, when people who knew Uja asked them about Uja their brother, they usually answered and replied them that Uja was nursing a child across over there (Odo-moma). So, they nick named Uja “to nursing a child” Uneoma-Unoma. This was the reason behind the Unoma but the gradual change from Uneoma/Unoma to Inoma was as a result of corruption of the word ‘Unoma’ by Igbo people precisely Omambala Igbo: Anam, Aguleri, Umueyi, Oyi and Agbamelum people (the closest people to Inoma. Thus, they mispronounced the word Uneoma/Unoma to Inoma. This is how we widely came to be known as

Unoma-Inoma by peoples of various nationalities today. Later, the **brothers of Uja** migrated to different parts of Anambra, Edo and Kogi States where they are living happily to this day doing what their great grand fathers and ancestors were known for which included: farming, hunting, fishing, canoe making, clay pot making, buying and selling farm produce and other things.

UNOMA: A LAND OF AGRICULTURE, BRAVITY, LOVE AND HOSPITALITY

Uja, the great grand father/ancestor of Inoma did not migrate further. He remained in Odo-moMa; the vast acres of lands where we are living till this day, he remained here not only to “nurse a child but most gloriously to nurse multitude of children to the glory of God. Now, the major advantage of remaining in this area include that we are very close to River Niger and surrounded by many lakes, streams and other rivers. This helped our lands to be more fertile as the over flowing of their waters bring more manure for our farm lands. We can transport our goods and farm produce by water through boats and canoe and by upland through motors and motorcycles and bicycles to different destinations.

Unoma is blessed with many good things with regards to Agriculture and natural resources.

Unoma people produce different species of rice and yam as well as various kinds of pepper. These species of crops: yam, rice and pepper which we plant are on a very high demand in the market.

Thus, we are well known in Olumbanasaa and Igala land for rice, yam and pepper cultivation. We plant them in two dimensions namely Uda cultivation, that is planting down the flood way areas which normally begins by November/December. The specie of yam for Uda cultivation is called EKPE. The other dimension is planting at upland area which normally begins around March every year the specie of yam for upland cultivation is UGA/ADAKA. Our yam is the biggest, longest and sweetest among yam producing communities in West

Africa. Besides crops cultivation and production, we are also widely known for fishing as we are surrounded with lakes ponds and stream where we do fish and catch different kind and species of fishes in their big sizes. The best time for fishing for big and multiple catch is around February- April.

Unoma people is also widely known for hunting in fact, the great grand father/ancestor of Unoma : Uja was a great hunter. His nicked name is Omajode Igala word for a great hunter. Unoma hunters hunt and get antelopes, grass cutters, tigers and other bush meat.

Unoma is equally known for their love and hospitality. Even the early missionaries of Catholic and Anglicans can testify to them. We welcomed them wholeheartedly and donated them with large hectares of land for school and church building towards development of our community. Unoma had lived hundreds of years before another set of migrating communities: (Owelle community from Owerri and Ukwalla community from Aghamelum areas respectively) came down to our already occupied land. Unoma people saved them from marauding hands of other neighbouring Igala communities. Unoma welcomed and embraced them with love and hospitality. With them, Unoma is called Inoma Akato that is Inoma, Owelle and Ukwala communities. Unoma people are living in peace and harmony with them despite small misunderstanding that occasionally corrupt in. now Owelle and Ukwalla communities are autonomous and allied communities, Unoma people are maintaining friendly neighbour with them.

Finally, Unoma people are believed to have been under the mighty hands of God of heaven and protecting hands of their native deities. It is a common belief among our people that War would not enter Unoma. During the Nigerian/Biafran War. Nigerian federal troops advanced towards Unoma but God of heaven and our gods protected us and made Nigerian Army retreat back. (Unoma was on the side of Biafra). During Mmiata Anam/Unoma battle, all

fightings and shootings were on the borderline territories and never in and around Unoma villages.

SOCIO POLITICAL STRUCTURES OF UNOMA PEOPLE

Unoma villages: they include the following: **Edepu, Imeme, Egbatah, Omadelu, Ategbadu, Otoko, Ukojeina, Egwumichi, Onadi, Ugbajah, Ugbajenkwo, Egwekwo, Okota.** Each of these villages has two to three kindred/ kinsmen.

THE POSITION OF ATTA OKAKWU IN INOMA

Atta Okakwu is the highest traditional position in Inoma socio- cultural setting.

The post is given to the oldest person in the community. **The current Atta Okakwu is NWABUNWANNE NDULUE, The Atta Okakwu of Inoma**

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF ATTA OKAKWU

- The person must be the indigene of Unoma in every aspect and ramification.
- The person must never be a slave or born of a slave woman
- The person must have taken title of Ogbuefi in the community.
- The person must not marry a slave woman/women
- The genealogy of the candidate for Atta Okakwu must be free from any known crimes and taboos
- The person must be well known by all and his means of livelihood must be clear to all
- Note: If Atta Okakwu dies he may be buried on Afo or Eke market day but must never be buried on Nkwo and Orie Market day

NOTE: Unoma is observing the Afo day as her own market day in honour of her great grand mother whose name was Afo. So till this day Afo day is a sacred day for the commencement and conclusion of our cultural festivals and celebrations like Mkwelegwu cultural fiesta and new yam festival.

AGE GRADE SYSTEM OLD GROUPING IN UNOMA

1. **Ijiamalagwu:** Forming age grade starts in Unoma from learning a masquerade call Ijiamalegwu. This Ijiamalegwu is for young people of age limit of seven to eight years and it last for three or more years.
2. **Idifu:** Next after Ijiamalegwu in Idifu. It indicates that the group has grown to the highest youth position. This group will also lasts for three years and hand over to those following them.
3. **Uteegbe:** This Uteegbe group is the youngest elder group in the community. Their works as from olden days was to clear community roads and path ways and also carry corpses of dead persons for burial rites. The traditional dance for this group is Ogene or Odogwu dance.
4. **Iyaika:** The work of this group is all about masquerade in the community. At the time of annual festival these groups first knows about it and alert the people on the need for adequate preparations.
5. **Ichogwa:** Ichogwa group is the last group in the age grade system and grouping in Unoma. The people of this group stay with Atta Okakwu. They help him to govern Unoma and solve any problem in the community. Atta Okakwu cannot solve all the problems alone but with the help of Ichogwa group, things would be going on well orderly and accordingly.

Note: Age grade grouping in Unoma is for both males and females: men and women as against some towns/communities in Igbo land where Age grade is strictly men's affairs. The summary of the importance and works of Age grade system in Unoma is for development, peace and security, stability, social order, equity and justice in our land Unoma. Those who default any of the community's rules, norms and regulations are punished accordingly including the following: imposing simple fines/levy to imposing heavy levy and killing of any goat on the streets later the offender must have to pay for those goats killed and other things that follow. The most grievous crime like

willful killing of ones' neighbour attracts heavier penalties like: death, ostracization and exile etc.

UNOMA IN RELATION WITH GOVERNMENT

Inoma people relate with government of any level through Inoma development Union (IDU) which has president general and the body of executives, their tenure last for three year renewable tenure.

Also, Unoma people relate with government through the office of Igwe. Now, **the current Igwe of Inoma is His Royal Majesty Igwe EMMANUEL CHUKWUKA OLLOTA, Onoja 1 of Inoma.**

THE LIST OF VARIOUS AGE GRADE IN UNOMA IN ORDER OF THEIR SENORITY

Omejulu	1924
Oligba	1926
Mege	1928
Ogogo	1930
James	1932
Ojemba	1934/1936
Idai	1938
Olima	1940
Akato	1942
Igbamali	1944
Anuka	1946/1947
Ogboma	1949
Olumba	1951
Akwumechenyi	1953
Wonder	1955
Ijele/Okpoka	1957

Omenu	1959
Ugbada	1961
Olumba (junior)	1963
Anuka Asakpa	1965
Akakwuloto	1967
Okachalikpo	1969
Igbamali (junior)	1971
Ugo Eze	1973
Ukwala- Agu	1975
Igbonwa	1977
Eriko	1979
Ebele	1981
Ejegidigbe	1983
Ugbada (junior)	1985
Isike	1987-1992
Agaba 1	1993
Agaba 11	1996

Note: Below these named Age grades are various grouping of Ijiamalagwu.

Conclusions: Unoma is a vast acre of land for Olumbanasaa, Igala land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey with divine deserting and protect.

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